

Sugar Challenge Introduction & Preparation Tips

Congrats! You have taken the first step towards a healthier you by committing to this 30-Day Sugar Challenge! The four purposes of this challenge are to reset your metabolism, stabilize your blood sugar, help you recognize the amount of sugar you consume daily, and help you learn how to recognize added sugar when reading food labels.

Time to get ready! Go through your fridge, freezer, and pantry and set aside anything with added sugar in the ingredient list. Add some fruit to your shopping list to enjoy when the sweet cravings hit. Remember this challenge includes not eating or drinking anything sweet that is *added to food* including natural sugars such as agave, honey, maple syrup, or sugar alternatives like stevia or monk fruit.

The goal of this challenge: To help adjust your sugar consumption to the recommended amount. Throughout this challenge your brain might tell you to consume sugar because you feel better when you do. Even if you cannot be entirely free from it for 3 weeks, you are still helping your body to detox. Slip-ups happen, cravings happen, sometimes parties and dinner dates happen. If you have some sugar, do not give up, just do your best! Do not diet or restrict calories during this challenge. This challenge will encourage healthy eating habits that you can maintain or implement in the future.

Read all food labels. Added sugar and sweetener is not the easiest to locate. There is one definitive place to look when you're buying food - the food label. Look to the food label and you'll find info in the **ingredient list** and also the **added sugar** list. The label may not list any added sugars, but be sure to read the ingredients. If a form of sugar is listed, it's not recommended in this challenge.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size 1 cup (68g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories	370
<small>% Daily Value*</small>	
Total Fat 5g	7%
Saturated Fat 1g	3%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 150mg	6%
Total Carbohydrate 48g	15%
Dietary Fiber 5g	14%
Total Sugars 13g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 12g	
Vit. D 2mcg 10% • Calcium 210mg 20%	
Zinc 7mg 50% • Biotin 300mcg 100%	
<small>*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.</small>	

IDENTIFYING ADDED SUGAR

With 56 different names, it's easy for different types of added sugar to be hidden in food products.

- Naturally occurring sugar, like those in fruit and milk, is different than added sugar.
- Most food labels now include an "added sugar" row to show you how much is added.
- Recommended intake for added sugar is no more than 40 grams (or 10 tsp) in one day – and this includes what you add yourself, like in your coffee or tea. Try to keep within these limits on most days.



Look at the serving size to determine how much you'll eat.



Then look to the added sugar row to determine how it fits into your limit of 40g/day.

Ingredients to watch out for: Sugar alcohols- words ending in "-ol" (i.e. erythritol, manitol, sorbitol, etc.), anything "sugar free" (stevia, sucralose, saccharin and aspartame), brown rice syrup, corn syrup/ high fructose corn syrup

Added sugar is prominent in about 75% of the grocery store, so spend some time looking at not only the food label, but also the ingredient list. This challenge is about a refrain, reset, and recharge. It isn't going

to be easy but it will be worth it. Remember, you aren't alone in this! This will be an awesome challenge, you'll learn a lot, and by the end of the challenge you will feel a major difference!

Sugar Challenge Week 1

What to expect: As with any dietary change, sticking to it is key. If your goal for this challenge is to reduce sugar from your diet long term, being able to get through the first few difficult weeks of this challenge is crucial. Sugar in itself isn't "bad", but it should be eaten in moderation alongside a healthy diet. The first two weeks of the challenge are the most difficult because you are training your body to restrain from added sugar that used to be a part of your diet and may have even become an addiction. Don't be alarmed if over the next few weeks, you don't feel like yourself. You may start experiencing "sugar withdrawal" symptoms that often include brain fog, anxiety, headaches, fatigue and even depression. It's pretty amazing the effects sugar has on our bodies.

What to eat: During this challenge, no food is off limit other than sweeteners of course. Remember, sweeteners include the artificial *and* the natural kind, like honey and maple syrup. Try to eat foods from the five food groups: proteins, dairy, fruits, veggies and whole grains. This will help keep your body sustained with the nutrients it needs to function properly. Don't forget to eat! Make sure you're eating real food regularly throughout the day. Drink extra water to help curb your cravings.

Snack Ideas:

- Eggs
- Nuts
- Cheese
- Fruit
- Hummus
- Veggies
- Lunchmeat (lookout for added sugar)
- Smoothies
- Fresh squeezed juice
- Plain yogurt with fruit

Common foods with added sugars to avoid: Bread, packaged protein bars, granola, yogurt, gum, dressings, beef jerky, dried fruits, fruit juice, cereals, common lunch meats, most meals at restaurants, and most pre-packaged foods.

Don't worry, you can find quality food with good ingredients if you look for it! As a word of encouragement, if you happen to get off track one day and eat some added sugar, you can still jump back into it the next day and try again. This doesn't have to be perfect, just give it your best!

Sugar Challenge Week 2

What is the difference between added sugars and natural sugars?

Added Sugars:

- Added to foods
- Manufacturers use it to preserve food
- Keeps food fresh longer
- Found in nearly all processed or restaurant foods
- Absorbed immediately by the body

Natural Sugars:

- Typically found in fruits and vegetables
- Often occur through photosynthesis
- Occur without human interference
- Attach to nutrients and fiber in food
- Have to be broken down to be absorbed

The immediate absorption of added sugars and sugar substitutes are what cause the highs and lows of blood sugar that induce cravings. Fruits and vegetables provide a number of health benefits, so it is much healthier to continue eating them and not get rid of these natural sugars in your diet.

During this challenge: Avoid sugar substitutes because these are typically much sweeter than other added sugars and lead to worse sugar cravings. Watch out for labels indicating something is “sugar-free” or “diet” because this generally means they contain sugar substitutes.

Did you know, according to the American Heart Association (AHA) adults in America consume an average of 77 grams (15.5 tsp) of sugar per day! That adds up to 60 pounds of sugar a year! It's recommended that we cut down this number to less than 10 tsp per day (AHA suggests no more than 6-9 tsp.)

Don't give up! By now you might be experiencing your worst withdrawal symptoms. You might be tired, depressed, grumpy, or feeling gross. This is a good thing, stick with it! As with most big changes, things will tend to get worse before they get better. Increase your water intake to help overcome cravings. Drinking plain tea can also help when cravings hit. Keep in mind, cravings typically last less than 5 minutes. Try distracting yourself with a quick walk, stretch, or a small healthy snack. Soon your cravings will lessen and you will be feeling great! You may even find yourself thinking you should have made these changes long ago.



Sugar Challenge Week 3

You are almost done with the Sugar Challenge! By now your withdrawal symptoms will start to go away and you should begin feeling great! Three weeks is a long time to go without added sugar and it may feel extra challenging to stay on track at this point. The best way to keep up with it is to be prepared with healthy snacks and homemade recipes. A little food prep for meals and snacks on the weekend can go a long way during a busy week. Give yourself grace on days where the detox seems like too much and be ready to get right back on track if you cave to those cravings.

Think back to WHY you started the challenge. If you are struggling to keep going or considering ending it early, think back to your initial reasoning for doing this challenge. Think about how your body will benefit from less added sugar. By the end, you should have reduced cravings for sugar and unhealthy foods. Not consuming additional sugar during the challenge will allow your blood sugar to stabilize. This reduces the highs and lows of blood sugar, which can cause you to crave sugar and other foods that provide no actual nourishment. These highs and lows also give your body a short burst of energy before you crash and need another sugar boost. The nourishment you will be getting during this challenge without the additional sugar will also help to reboot your metabolism. Consuming healthy foods gives your body long lasting energy with no crash.

Now is the time to get creative and plan ways to keep your food and daily activities interesting.

- Next trip to the grocery store, find some unique produce to try.
- Plan different cuisines to try this week: Thai, Caribbean, Indian or Korean. Be careful to watch for ingredients with added sugar and substitute them if needed.
- Look up “Naturally sweetened recipes” or “No added sugar recipes” to get to some fun, new, sugar free recipes to try.

Stay strong and carry on, you are almost there!



Sugar Challenge Week 4

Congratulations! You made it through the “detox” part of this challenge. This week we will reintroduce added sugar in a healthy way while staying within the recommended limits of 10tsp (40g) per day and continuing to avoid synthetic sugars.

We want to avoid the “restrict-binge” pattern that you may have experienced if you’ve ever tried to follow a specific diet before. This is the cycle of limiting certain foods or calories then overindulging. If this happens, do not restrict the next day to “make up” for it. Give yourself grace and focus on nourishing your body with a balanced diet.

Why are we still avoiding synthetic sugars? Research has found that artificial sugars may be harmful to the body. They can negatively impact weight, blood sugar control, and gut health, while increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease and certain cancers. As a reminder, artificial sweeteners include: saccharin, aspartame, sucralose (Splenda), Acesulfame potassium (Ace-K), Neotame, and Advantame.

How to reintroduce: We recommend that you reintroduce added sugars gradually throughout this final week. Adding it all back at once may induce cravings and cause blood sugar spikes. Continue consuming a balanced diet and prioritizing natural sugars found in fruits and vegetables, as well as high-fiber foods to keep your blood sugar regulated. As you add sugar back into your diet, be mindful of how you feel after you eat it. Are you crashing shortly after? Do you notice any digestive issues? Does it leave you craving more? Noticing how certain sugars and amounts of sugar affects your body can help you adjust your intake so you feel your very best!



Sugar Challenge Final Day

First things first -- **CONGRATULATIONS!** You have made it to day 30, which marks your re-entry into a lifestyle that is meant to have a sweet treat every now and then.

The task now is to create a pattern of eating where you're consuming no more than 10tsp (40g) of added sweetener a day (apart from the occasional treat) while avoiding all synthetic varieties.

By reading labels for added sugar and monitoring what you add yourself, you can stay within the recommended amounts and your body will be able to function the way it's supposed to. Remember, a pattern of eating out or consuming foods prepared outside of the home where you don't have access to a label will likely direct you off track.

When you're in control of your food, you're in control of your body.

Hopefully this past month has been eye opening for you and helped you to seek out foods and food products that don't need any added sweetener. By now you should be able to identify and **AVOID** all the synthetic sweeteners and other synthetic ingredients that cause inflammation. You may find that re-introducing synthetic sweeteners and synthetic ingredients gives you a stomachache. Listen to your body's response and avoid those ingredients.

Your body functions best when it gets REAL FOOD. Strive to eat mostly whole foods and don't fret over an occasional sweet treat.

By eating real food such as whole grains, meats, fruits, veggies and quality snacks -- you can create a solid foundation of health. Keep it simple.